Commemoration of the Dead at CIA

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amnesia. *Loss of memory.*

anamnesis. *The recalling of things past; recollection; reminiscence.*

—*Oxford English Dictionary*, Online Edition.

> **"History—as it is learned and remembered—shapes identity."**

Almost every federal agency has a history unit or staff, but, to a degree that is unique in government, CIA's History Staff exists not so much to help explain the Agency to the public—though we do that too in our external publications and appearances—but rather to explain CIA to ourselves. We do that by publishing classified histories, monographs, and articles in *Studies in Intelligence*; by giving briefings on historical topics or figures; by answering requests for historical context and information from the Agency's leadership; and by teaching in CIA's training facilities.[1]

History, however, is more than a product like an article, book, or briefing; it's even more than the myriad documents or oral histories that serve as primary sources. History also comprises transmitted memory, values, and culture, and therefore history—as it is learned and remembered—shapes identity. History as memory and identity helps define who we are, what we are doing, and where we are going. One of the most important aspects of organizational or institutional memory deals with remembering the dead—those of the organization who gave their lives for the organization and its mission.

Object, Action, and Content: The Essential Elements of Commemoration

Few things are more deeply human or older in human experience than commemoration of the dead. This is reflected in language and in the physical remnants of the past. For example, linguists note a pre-

[1] This essay is based in part on the author's presentation to the 2005 conference of the Society for History in the Federal Government.

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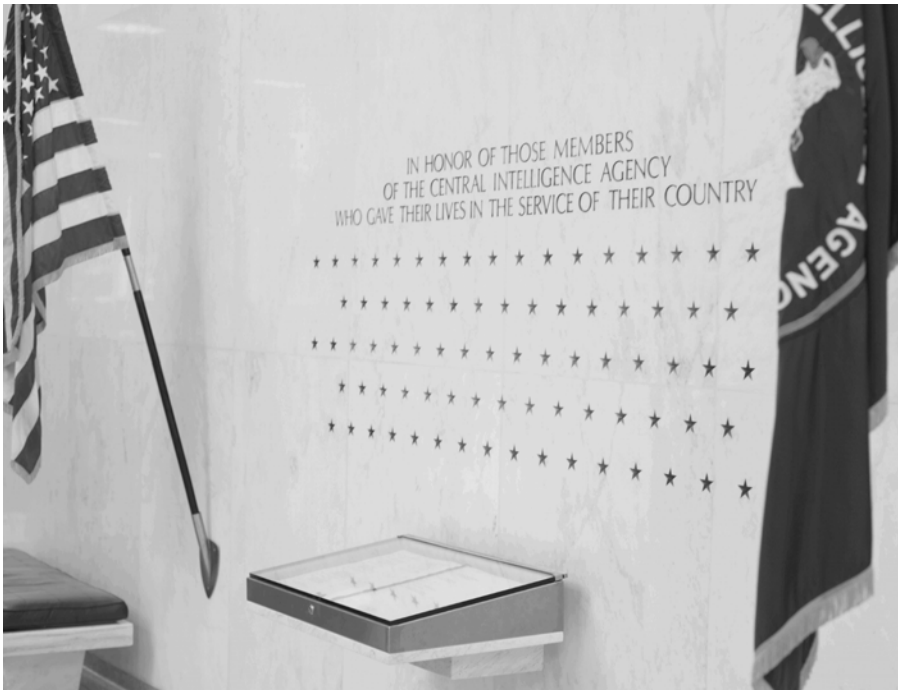
historic Indo-European link between ancient words for "remembering," for "witness," and for "martyr" (someone who gives his life for a cause greater than the individual).[2] In recent years, some British archeologists have concluded that Stonehenge, the ancient monument on Britain's Salisbury Plain, is primarily a memorial to the dead rather than a temple, observatory, or war monument.[3]

The various words we use today to express the central idea of calling to mind departed people and past events—commemoration, remembrance, or memorialization—are all based on the word "memory." For individuals, memory is both a natural and an elusive thing. While individual memory is natural, it fades over time and dies with the person.

For communities, institutions, and organizations, by contrast, memory is not natural—it has to be arranged and managed—but it can be made more lasting than the life of any single individual. Effective commemoration by an institution, to my mind, must have three essential elements that work together: *object*, *action*, and *content*. By *object* is meant the physical thing or space (or both) that serves to represent or depict the collective memory and also serves as a focal point for the *action*, which is the gathering together of individuals for the express purpose of remembering. This *action* will be more effective the more it is repeated regularly, rising to the level of *ritual*, purposefully and uniformly connecting the past with the present. Finally, the *content* associated with the *object* and the *action*—who is being remembered, what they did, when and how, and why it remains important for the community—should be as specific as possible, or the commemoration will not be as effective as it could be.

CIA's Memorial Wall (shown below) represents the best example at the Agency of effective commemoration and probably is the best possible expression of it by an intelligence service, given the inherent tension between secrecy and specificity of identity: The wall is the *object;* the annual ceremony is the *action;* and *content* is provided by the Book of Honor at the wall and by the roll call of names read at every annual ceremony.[4]

By contrast, the Memorial Garden near the Headquarters Auditorium lacks two of these key features of commemoration. To be sure, as an *object* the garden with its pool and fish, stonework, and benches is a very pleasant place (shown on facing page). It was intended to



[2] See the *OED* entry for **memory**.

[3] John Noble Wilford, "Stonehenge was a monument to the dead from the start," *International Herald Tribune* (online edition), 30 May 2008. See also the Web site of the Stonehenge Riverside Project at http://www.shef.ac.uk/archaeology/research/stonehenge.

[4] See: https://www.cia.gov/about-cia/virtual-tour/virtual-tour-flash/index.html.

be pleasant, and thus it succeeds as a place of reflection. But it lacks both the *action* and *content* necessary for effective commemoration.

From the time of the garden's dedication in 1996, there has not been a single assembly of the Agency community at the site. Moreover, the Memorial Garden was dedicated broadly in memory of all people who died while working for or with the Agency—staff and contractors (thereby overlapping with the Memorial Wall), employees of proprietaries, and also foreign national employees and assets. There is little specificity, as the plaque in the garden reveals: "In remembrance of those whose unheralded efforts served a grateful nation." People who enjoy the site should be forgiven if its purpose eludes them.

Another commemorative effort is the memorial for two CIA officers slain on Route 123, the public road near the main CIA entrance. While there is an impressive commemorative *object* with specific *content*—twin benches with a marble inscription naming the men and honoring their sacrifice—it is so far from the orbit of everyday CIA community life that almost the only CIA employees who see it do so while driving into or out of the compound (or while jogging by). I understand that family members gather periodically at the site, but the lack of commemorative *action* by the institution would make it likely

the men would be forgotten except by family—if they were not already memorialized at the annual memorial ceremony.

For institutions, preserving memory is a challenge, not the least over who or what should be remembered. Historians who specialize in the relatively new field of "memory studies" point out that in recent centuries commemoration of the past has often been contentious, especially when the commemorative act or function deals with remembering the dead.[5] The idea that institutions and organizations *ought* to commemorate at least some of its deceased membership is usually not controversial—the issue is *how* to do it.

The potential points of disagreement and dispute are numerous: who is chosen for remembrance; by what criteria and process are the choices made; what enduring physical monument will be set up to help us remember the dead (the Vietnam Memorial was hugely contentious on this point); what kind of perennial ceremony, if any, will be conducted to focus collective memory; and even who is deciding on whom to invite to the commemoration.

People in a community or organization typically will have differing opinions on these matters. They are more likely than not to have passionate views about something as personal as honoring dead friends and colleagues, and, in most cases, they will speak out about how they think the dead should be remembered. After an open,

[5] See, for example, Edward Lilenthal's *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), and his *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

For CIA, the first issue has been not how *but* whether *the dead of the Agency should be commemorated by that community.*

public, and possibly heated debate, the memorial will be constructed, tempers will subside, and gradually, over time, memories of the departed will dim, fewer and fewer members of the community will know their stories, and, in the end, perhaps only the physical memorial itself will be left as a testament to the fallen, with only a few inside specialists aware of just who is being remembered by it.

At the Central Intelligence Agency, however—as with so many things—the normal pattern, if not actually reversed, is at least very different. The primary difference is that, for CIA, the first issue has been not *how* but *whether* the dead of the Agency should be commemorated by that community, and then only secondarily what that commemoration would look like. Commemoration of CIA's dead over the past 60 years has evolved, in a very quiet and gradual way, from, at best, a very limited, ad hoc, and covert practice of insiders—with no lasting memorial to look at—to something regular, surprisingly open, and permanent that involves and informs the Agency community as a whole.

The Unique Nature of CIA Commemoration

For any organization, "commemoration" is the act or acts of remembrance that evoke unique attributes or past achievements of the organization and its members and by which the organization bolsters its sense of identity among its workforce. What is commemorated tends to be both historical and thematic: we remember something or someone in the past and use that remembrance for present purposes, such as to feel better about the work we do, to raise morale, to increase a sense of professionalism, or to remind the workforce about the sacrifice inherent in the work. We also connect with colleagues from the past so that, 50 years from now, our colleagues in the future will be more likely to remember us.

In the case of CIA, we commemorate to create a sense that we, the CIA workforce, have an important mission and one worth the inconveniences, oddities, and sacrifices characteristic of intelligence work. This is the "veneration" part of commemorating the dead; as one historian of memory studies has observed, commemorative acts such as speech making and monument building are designed "to ensure continued allegiance" and to provide a defense against attacks either from within (heresy) or without (defilement).[6] Because of the apparent paradox of a secret intelligence service serving a democracy, we CIA officers are continually reminding ourselves that we are "honorable men," in Richard Helms's phrase that later was appropriated by William Colby for the title of his memoirs.[7]

Where We Are in Commemorating the Dead

Today at CIA, our major act of commemoration—the closest thing we have to a collective "vehicle of memory"—is the annual memorial ceremony at which we remember CIA employees who have died in the line of duty. In the current practice, we gather in the lobby of the Original Headquarters Building (OHB), usually in May or June, before the beautiful marble face of the Memorial Wall, on which there are carved, at this writing, 89 stars, one for each fallen CIA employee; this is in accordance with the ancient human tradition of remembering transient lives in the permanence of stone.[8]

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[6] Lilenthal, 5.

[7] "The nation must to a degree take it on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to her service." DCI Richard Helms, address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington, D.C., 14 April 1971. This speech is reprinted in many places, including *Vital Speeches of the Day*; the original is found in ODCI job 80R01284A, box 1, folder 6.

[8] Two stars were added in late May 2008; they represent operations officers who lost their lives in the line of duty this year.

The families, whether their loved one died long ago or just that year, are invited, and many come year after year. The Agency workforce is well represented, with all seats taken and many people standing through the whole ceremony. CIA's closed circuit TV system transmits the event to CIA buildings and facilities in the Washington area and even around the world.

The ceremony is conducted and watched with sobriety and respect. After the guests have been seated and welcomed, an introductory event (variously, in recent years, a military honor guard's presentation of the colors, or the singing of the national anthem, or a benediction) precedes the main event: remarks by the director of CIA (or, infrequently, a suitable senior representative). The director speaks about the nature of CIA's work and the devotion to our country's security represented by the stars on the Memorial Wall.

If there have been CIA deaths in the line of duty since the previous annual ceremony, the director will talk about additional stars on the wall. Even if the names and their stories are classified, he will mention the names, give a summary of their sacrifice, and offer condolences and thanks to the families present. Sometimes he will dwell on the stories of two, three, or four historical cases thematically. George Tenet, when he was director, was genuinely and obviously moved by the stories he was telling, and he often had to brush away tears. Invariably the director exhorts the Agency workforce to remember the stars on the wall and the sacrifices the people they represent made.

A wreath is then laid by the wall. Following is the solemn roll call, sometimes called the Roll of Honor: senior representatives of all four directorates (analytic, operational, science & technology, and support) read aloud the entire list of names of all the stars, even the ones whose association with the CIA are still classified, usually after the director tells everyone that we need to keep those names out of the public. In effect, everyone present is given a limited security clearance for this information. Finally, a bugler plays "Taps," often to the shedding of tears in the audience, and the ceremony is over. The Agency provides refreshments in a nearby hallway, and the families mingle among themselves and with Agency officers who knew their loved ones.

Another aspect of the Memorial Wall is worth noting, one that has been the subject of a book by the journalist Ted Gup, *The Book of Honor*. Gup wrote that "The FBI, DEA, State Department, and even Amtrak have memorial walls to those who died in service. But all of these identify their fallen and celebrate their sacrifices. CIA's is different, a memorial to men and women who are faceless."[9]

He's referring to the Book of Honor that is attached to the Memorial Wall, under the carved stars. This book lists most of the names of the fallen, alongside the year of their death. Of the 89 stars now listed in that book, 35 have blanks where their names should be next to the year of death. Members of the public who visit CIA Headquarters can view the open page of the book and read the names.[10] The name associated with the first star, Douglas Mackiernan, appears next to the year 1950, and his name was revealed only in 2006, 56 years after his death. Of the publicized names, perhaps the most well known are those of Richard Welch, the CIA station chief in Athens,

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[9] Ted Gup, *The Book of Honor: Covert Lives and Classified Deaths at the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 3.

[10] Until recently, CIA's public Web site included a picture of the Book of Honor with all the names legible, but in the picture of the book currently used only two names are visible.

who was gunned down at his home just before Christmas 1975, and Johnny Micheal Spann, a CIA paramilitary officer who, in November 2001, was the first US combat death in the Afghanistan campaign.

Despite CIA's unique missions and the unusual circumstances surrounding most of the cases of our fallen officers, the annual memorial ceremony in front of the Memorial Wall with its Book of Honor strikes one as a normal, natural, and appropriate thing to do. It is a permanent feature on the calendar, and the workforce looks forward to it and counts on it. They bring the Agency workforce together in grief, but more importantly, in a sense of purpose. The result of this commemorative activity is a workforce that identifies more closely with CIA service, that is more willing to sacrifice for its mission, and that as a result arguably does its job better.

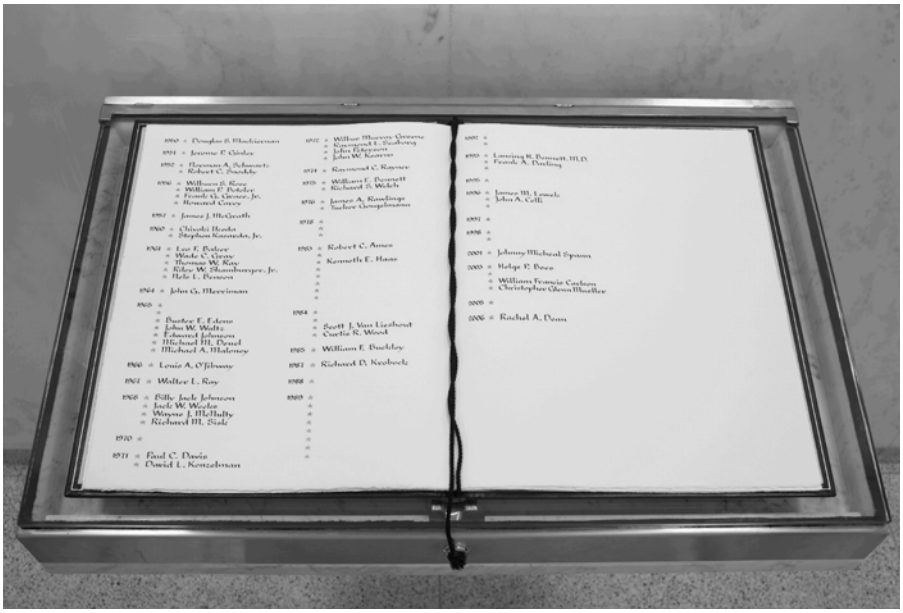
Where We've Been

But it was not always so. For most of its history the Agency either chose not to commemorate its dead or did it in a way that did not fulfill a commemorative function for the organization as a whole. Because of the dominant culture of the operations directorate and its tendency to keep so much of its work compartmented, commemoration, if it happened at all, was kept under wraps.[11] Remembrances of the dead were done individually and involved presenting the family, in a small, closed ceremony, with a posthumous award that usually had to stay at the Agency.

This limited commemoration, which sprung out of the cultural attributes of compartmentation and "need to know," resulted in a lack of institutional, corporate memory, so that the memory of departed colleagues was limited to a few insiders within a division or, in many cases, simply lost altogether. Take, for example, the case of Douglas Mackiernan, an operations officer who died in the line of duty very early in the Agency's history. This particularly adventuresome and resourceful CIA officer should have been remembered from his death in 1950 as a hero and inspiration to generations of CIA operations officers.

Instead, he was simply forgotten, even within Far East (later East Asia) division. His own division chief at the time of Mackiernan's death, in writing up a classified history of relevant operations 20 years later, mentions him only in passing—and gets both his name and his date of death wrong. Even worse is the case of Daniel Dennett (see box on next page), a well-regarded officer whose death on an intelligence mission has gone without any commemoration at all, simply through an accident of the calendar.

[11] The "operations directorate" refers to what today is called the National Clandestine Service, which for more than 30 years was the Directorate of Operations and which old-timers and CIA historians sometimes still call the DDP (for Directorate of Plans).



CIA's Failure of Memory: Daniel Dennett, the Forgotten First Star?

Consider two officers who died in strikingly similar circumstances. In 1989, a CIA officer was killed in the line of duty when the twin-engine aircraft he was traveling in crashed into a mountain in a remote part of the Horn of Africa. Forty-two years before, another officer lost his life, also in the line of duty, when his twin-engine aircraft crashed, also into a mountain in a remote area of the Horn of Africa. Both officers came from academia, both loved history and languages, and both were highly regarded even though both were relatively new to the world of intelligence. There are significant differences in the two cases, of course, but regarding commemoration none more important than this: the officer who died in 1989 is represented by a star on the Memorial Wall and is remembered in the annual memorial ceremony, but the officer who died in 1947 has no memorial at CIA and is not remembered by the institution. How could this be? The answer is as simple as the calendar.

Born in 1910, Daniel C. Dennett, Jr., was a college professor and Mideast specialist with a Harvard Ph.D., proficiency in the Arabic language (as well as in German and French), and experience traveling and studying abroad in Arab and African countries; in the early 1930s he had taught at the American University in Beirut. Contemporary scholars of the Mideast considered him unusually insightful, even brilliant. In 1943, both the Office of Strategic Services and the State Department sought his services, but he chose intelligence over diplomacy and entered OSS. In the spring of 1944, Dennett went to Beirut as the OSS chief of the X-2 (counterintelligence) mission, serving in that position through the war's end and continuing as the representative in Beirut of the Strategic Services Unit, the successor organization of OSS. In mid-1946, Dennett was made the head of operations in Beirut, and he remained in that position when the SSU organization in Beirut was reorganized under the new Central Intelligence Group, the immediate predecessor of CIA.

The plane crash that took Dennett's life occurred on 20 March 1947, six months before CIG swapped its initials for CIA as a result of the Agency's enabling legislation, the National Security Act of 1947. Because Dennett died before CIA legally came into being, his case was automatically disallowed in early 1974 when CIA's Honor and Merit Board considered death cases to be represented by the first stars to be carved onto the Memorial Wall. Although he had been an OSS officer, he died well after World War II ended. Daniel Dennett is represented neither on the OSS memorial on one side of the OHB lobby nor on the CIA Memorial Wall on the other—as a CIG officer he almost literally falls in between, and he has fallen therefore from institutional memory.

There is a compelling argument that this highly praised and deeply respected US intelligence officer should be considered CIA's forgotten first star and should be commemorated on CIA's Memorial Wall. Most aspects of CIG as an organization—leadership, personnel, facilities, files, directives, practices and procedures—remained unchanged when it became CIA. It could be said that the only thing noticeable that changed was the letterhead—except that CIG letterhead was often used until it ran out. Of all the organizational transitions in CIA's direct lineage—OSS to SSU, SSU to CIG, CIG to CIA—the last of these was truly seamless. Certainly the Agency's leadership considered that CIA was simply a continuation of CIG.[1] The most appropriate example of the proposition that a death during the CIG period should be considered a CIA death is the personnel action terminating Dennett's service due to his death: it was executed by CIA on 3 October 1947, 15 days after CIG became CIA.[2]

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[1] See documents on this period in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950: The Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1996). Of special note is CIA general counsel Larry Houston's memo of 7 April 1948 in which he writes, "CIA began to function as CIG on 22 January 1946," i.e. when CIG was established by President Truman's executive order!

[2] At the risk of opening up another case of "failure of memory," I would point out that the airplane crash that killed Dennett also killed five others: one State Department employee and four US military personnel. One of the military men, John W. Creech, was an Army Signal Corps officer on extended assignment to CIG. Under today's practices, he would also be included on the Memorial Wall.

The blame for the lack of commemoration in CIA history must be laid at the door of the operations directorate, but it also gets the credit for the progress toward today's "normal" mode of commemoration.

The blame for the lack of commemoration in CIA history must be laid squarely at the door of the operations directorate, but it also gets all the credit for the progress made to get to today's "normal" mode of commemoration. There have been four major points of departure from CIA's original silence regarding its dead: in 1973, 1987, 1990, and 1995. Surprisingly, *in each case the impetus for change came from the operations directorate.*

Beginning to Open Up: 1973

1973 marks the first major change in how CIA remembered its fallen. It is no accident that, at that time, CIA was under siege. The public view of the Agency was shaped by revelations and exposes in the late 1960s regarding its subsidy of student and other nongovernmental groups as a way to fight the Cold War, and by reports that CIA had trained domestic police forces in apparent violation of its charter. This was a time when the public associated CIA with failures of the war in Southeast Asia and its perceived abuses, especially the Phoenix counterinsurgency program in South Vietnam. And far worse was to come.

The internal sense of being under siege may well have been exacerbated by President Nixon's peremptory firing of Director Helms—because Helms refused to involve CIA in the Watergate cover-up—and his replacement early in 1973 by James Schlesinger, who started a wave of forced retirements—about 7 percent of the workforce—earning him the nickname "Nixon's revenge." John Ranelagh—one of the better historians on CIA—has written of this period,

> *Bound firmly in the public's mind to the growing public disclosures of its secret activities, the CIA was a casualty of this mistrust, with few choices open to it. The agency pulled in its horns and sought a reputation for competence and professionalism in bureaucratic terms.*[12]

It is in this historical context—seeking an expression and an affirmation of professionalism while the Agency, its missions, and its people were under attack—that CIA operations officers in early 1973 proposed the establishment at CIA Headquarters of a memorial plaque to honor their colleagues who had died in the conflict in Southeast Asia.[13] At that point, the Agency had, since 1965, lost 14 officers in the region, mostly in Laos and in Vietnam, with four lost in combat operations during the previous year.

At that point, no memorial to the fallen had ever existed at CIA, though at least one high-level officer had tried to create one years before. In 1956, when plans were underway for what would become the Original Headquarters Building, DDCI Pierre Cabell expressed his wish that the new building include a "Hall of Honor" to memorialize CIA employees who had died in the line of duty.[14] Cabell—a West Point graduate and Air Force general—came, of course, from outside of CIA, from a military culture in which such commemoration is taken very seriously, and he considered honoring the fallen in such a place "only fitting and proper." Cabell's initiative went nowhere in the Agency's culture at the time.

But by 1973, with the Agency under attack, there was a felt need for commemoration, and it came from the ranks of the institutional culture, the operations directorate. The Honor and Merit Board responsible for these decisions expanded the concept to include all CIA officers who had died in the line of duty and to make it enduring—

[12] John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 488.

[13] Horatio Aragon, "Stars on the Wall," *Studies in Intelligence* 35, no. 3 (Fall 1991).

[14] CIA Office of Personnel memo, "Hall of Honor in New Building," 27 March 1956; in Agency Record Center, DCI Job 80R01731R, box 13, folder 1.

a permanent memorial wall rather than a mere plaque that could be removed or lost.

The Nathan Hale Sideshow

At the same time, and presumably issuing from the same felt need, a replica of Yale University's statue of Nathan Hale was made and placed just outside the Agency's main entrance in the fall of 1973.[15] Acquisition of this statue, originally an initiative of Director Helms in 1972 and erected when William Colby was DCI, was the first memorial object at CIA meant for the entire CIA community.[16] Even so, the connection was abstract: Nathan Hale, a Revolutionary War spy hanged by the British, who regretted he had but one life to lose for his country, obviously never served in CIA, but his story and his statue were meant to evoke among beleaguered intelligence officers a sense of sacrifice for country. In an internal memo, CIA employees were told that the statue "reminds us that American intelligence work began in the earliest days of the republic. [Nathan Hale's] memory is a tribute to the virtues of patriotism and valor to which we all aspire."[17]

Nathan Hale's statue does not represent progress in CIA's movement toward a more natural approach to commemoration.

The Nathan Hale statue is much beloved by the Agency community. It is a popular meeting place for individuals and groups. There is an endearing custom associated with the statue: CIA Museum staff often find that quarters have been placed in the metal ropes binding Hale's hands, or in his shoes (Hale's case officer, of course, was George Washington, who is depicted on the face of the quarter). This statue, however, does not represent progress in CIA's movement toward a more natural approach to commemoration.

One would think the Agency leadership of the mid-1970s, given the opportunity to bolster morale while under siege, would have made the most of it with a dedication ceremony, but old habits die hard. The Nathan Hale statue was quietly installed with no ceremony at all, and there is no record of any Agency ceremony there at any time.[18] I once asked DCI Colby's special assistant why there was no such event, and he said, "Colby's fashion was not to have ceremony."[19] This is not a surprising stance for a career operations officer. It was proba-

[15] In addition to the original Bela Pratt sculpture of Hale at Yale University, there are at least four copies: at Fort Nathan Hale in New Haven; in front of the Tribune Tower in Chicago; at FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C.; and at CIA. It is said that J. Edgar Hoover refused permission for CIA to copy the FBI's statue.

[16] I am not counting the bas-relief of Allen Dulles in the lobby of the Original Headquarters Building, as it was dedicated in 1968, some 10 months before Dulles passed away—from natural causes, not in the line of duty. I also do not count the Frank Wisner plaque that was unveiled at a closed CIA memorial ceremony comprising Wisner's friends and colleagues six years after Wisner's suicide; the plaque was to have been permanently hung in the office of the deputy director for operations but was lost and only recently was located in the holdings of the CIA Museum.

[17] Undated memorandum, "Nathan Hale statue," in Public Affairs Job 91-00782R, box 1, folder 4. For more on the statue's provenance see *Studies in Intelligence* 17, no. 3 in CIALink.

[18] Angus Thuermer, Assistant to the DCI for Public Affairs, letter of 23 October 1973, in Public Affairs Job 91-00782R, box 1, folder 5.

[19] Telephone conversation with Angus Thuermer, 4 March 2005.

As with the Nathan Hale statue, no ceremony was held to dedicate the Memorial Wall—it simply appeared one day.

bly seen as more than enough just to have the physical object.

Wall But No Ceremony

The same lack of ceremony initially obtained for the Memorial Wall, which was approved in late 1973 and sculpted in 1974, originally with 31 stars. As with the Nathan Hale statue, no ceremony was held to dedicate it—it simply appeared one day.

Moreover, memorial ceremonies would not begin until 13 years later, in May 1987. Why a memorial wall but no memorial ceremony—particularly when the public and media and congressional attacks on CIA were only getting more serious, more vociferous and argued for some kind of gathering to assert a collective sense of mission and self-worth? Colby was DCI into 1976, and we know what he thought about ceremony at CIA. To the traditional, secretive, anti-commemoration prevailing culture at CIA, an Agency-wide memorial ceremony raised the danger that employees who were not in the operations directorate would learn too much and perhaps even talk out of school. Even the fact of a ceremony would receive media attention and subsequent inquiries, and many at CIA—particularly operations officers—did not want that.

Enduring Wall, Annual Ceremony

This changed in 1987 for two reasons. As in 1973, there was a request from the ranks of the operations directorate to do something. A counterintelligence officer submitted an employee suggestion for an annual ceremony in front of the wall in part, he said, because "the majority of our employees, particularly the younger generation, are barely aware of the existence or the significance of this memorial." He said this would result in "rising morale and pride in our achievements which, in turn, would greatly contribute to our continuing effort to achieve excellence."[20] As in 1973, this idea—quite obvious to most people—was endorsed by senior management. One can almost imagine them hitting their foreheads and saying, "Why didn't we think of that?"

As in 1973, it also had to do with context: the murder of William Buckley, CIA station chief in Beirut, by terrorists in 1985; the public scrutiny from the brewing Iran-Contra affair; and also, perhaps, by the incapacitation and resignation several months previously of Director William Casey, an OSS veteran—an operator—who famously had said, "I want a no-profile agency."[21]

Casey, by the way, had openly criticized the Nathan Hale statue. He hadn't subscribed to the idea that the statue represented a patriotic, sacrificial sentiment; what he saw was the failure of a rank amateur who was caught and strung up. Casey initiated the commissioning of a statue of his intelligence hero, OSS director General William "Wild Bill" Donovan.[22] This was a pet project of Casey's, and he was immersed in its details in the months before he took ill in December 1986 with the brain tumor that would kill him.[23]

Among the many memos from Casey about the statue that I found in the protocol office's files, none mentioned having any kind of dedication ceremony—Casey just wanted the statue up. Donovan was Casey's idea of the proper icon of memory for CIA. In contrast to the Nathan Hale statue, which is passive, with a rope about the

[20] Employee suggestion in Protocol job 03-00013R, box 1, folder 1.

[21] William Casey quoted in the *Washington Post*, 29 April 1983; cited in Charles Lathrop, *The Literary Spy: The Ultimate Source for Quotations on Espionage and Intelligence* (New Haven: Yale, 2004).

[22] *Newsweek*, 23 June 1986: 5. See also Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990), 214, 271, 518.

[23] See Protocol job 00-01351R, box 2, folder 26 "Dedication of Donovan Statue."

For the first two ceremonies, only *Agency employees were allowed to attend.*

neck—the very picture of defeat—the Donovan statue (above) conveys vigor, action, and success, just as Casey intended. Casey, however, had resigned in January 1987, and he died May 6th. The first memorial ceremony was held later that month before the wall. It is open to doubt whether it would have happened had Casey still been DCI.

In May 1987 the Agency was in its 40th year, and there were 50 stars on the wall. Presiding at the ceremony was Deputy Director Robert Gates, who, not insignificantly, did not make his career in operations but in the analysis directorate. The new DCI, former FBI director Judge William Webster, had taken the oath of office the day before, but in subsequent years, he gave the remarks, and the ceremony became an annual event. In a sense, when William Casey died, the old way of non-commemoration at CIA died with him.

Further Progress

In the years that followed, the annual ceremony gradually became more open. For the first two ceremonies, *only* Agency employees were allowed to attend. That changed in 1989, when Richard Welch's memory was highlighted and his widow and son were in attendance as honored guests of the operations directorate. After that, it was hard to argue for limiting attendance to CIA employees, and, starting in 1990, all surviving non-Agency family members who could be found were invited—the third major step in the Agency's opening up of its commemorative activity.[24]

The fourth great change in CIA commemoration occurred at the 1995 ceremony. With DCI John Deutch presiding, the names of all those remembered on the Memorial Wall—covert and overt—were read aloud at the ceremony for the first time. This was a huge development, given that uncleared family members had been attending the annual ceremony for years, and it had been proposed by operations officers.

The tenor of the times, even more so than in 1973 and 1987, may well have played a role in this felt need to express the identities of the dead. By the time of the 1995 ceremony, CIA was under its fourth director in four years, and Director Deutch was not exactly beloved by the operations directorate. The Agency at the time was publicly criticized for employing human rights violators, for the Aldrich Ames debacle, for allegedly biased analysis of Haiti, for not having a post–Cold War mission, even for insufficiently supporting the US military. CIA also was under scrutiny from Congress, which commissioned studies on intelligence reform. Since then, the annual reading of all the names, covert and overt, has continued to the present.[25]

DDCI Gates placing wreath at first formal commemoration in May 1987.

[24] See the individual folders for the annual memorial ceremonies in Protocol Job 00-01351R, boxes 1 and 3.

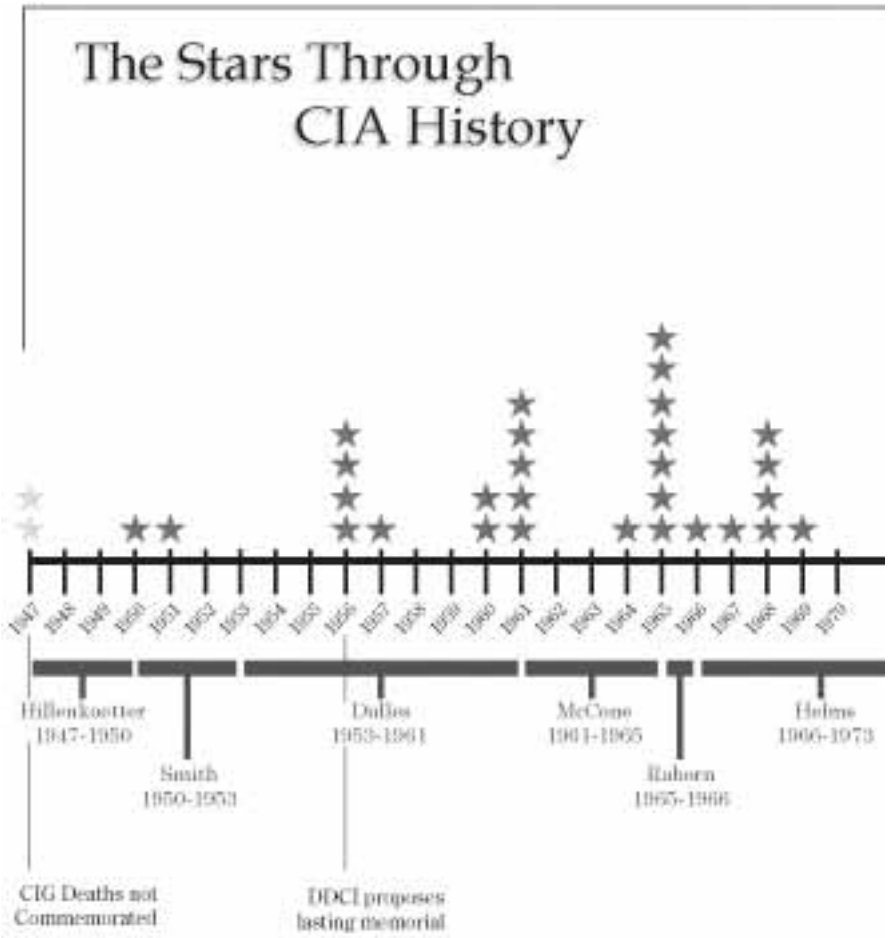
The "Stars," as we have come to call our commemorated dead at CIA, have become part of the symbolic vocabulary recognizable to all. One officer related to me that, while driving by the A-12 reconnaissance aircraft on display on the CIA compound recently, she saw the two large stars on the front of the exhibit wall and instantly knew—knowing nothing else about the aircraft or its history—that two CIA people had lost their lives in that program.

In order to provide the cleared CIA community with the opportunity to learn the stories of the men and women honored on the wall, the Center for the Study of Intelligence in 2003 created a virtual Hall of Honor, which is administered by the CIA Museum and available to authorized users of the Agency's intranet. It is similar to the FBI's Hall of Honor, which is available on the FBI's public site, though CIA's is classified.[26] Here, at last, the specific content of commemoration is preserved in a way that is more comprehensive and accessible than that provided by an annual ceremony.

The Primacy of the Past?

In 2004, DCI Tenet gave an unusually long and emotional speech at the annual memorial ceremony, in which he mentioned by name 27 of the Stars on the wall. Perhaps only Tenet knew it at the time, but he was presiding at his last memorial ceremony at CIA. Besides Tenet's always heartfelt exhortation to remember and to derive inspiration from the memory of our fallen comrades, he said something quite remarkable, even startling:

> *When it comes right down to it, our work is all about them—not about what is in the* Washington Post, *not about what happened in the last congressional hearing—thank God—[and] not about what reorganization plan you do or don't like. It is about*



[25] The one exception is the 1998 ceremony—George Tenet's first as director—when the covert names were omitted from the roll call. I've not been able to find out why this happened, but the practice was resumed the following year.

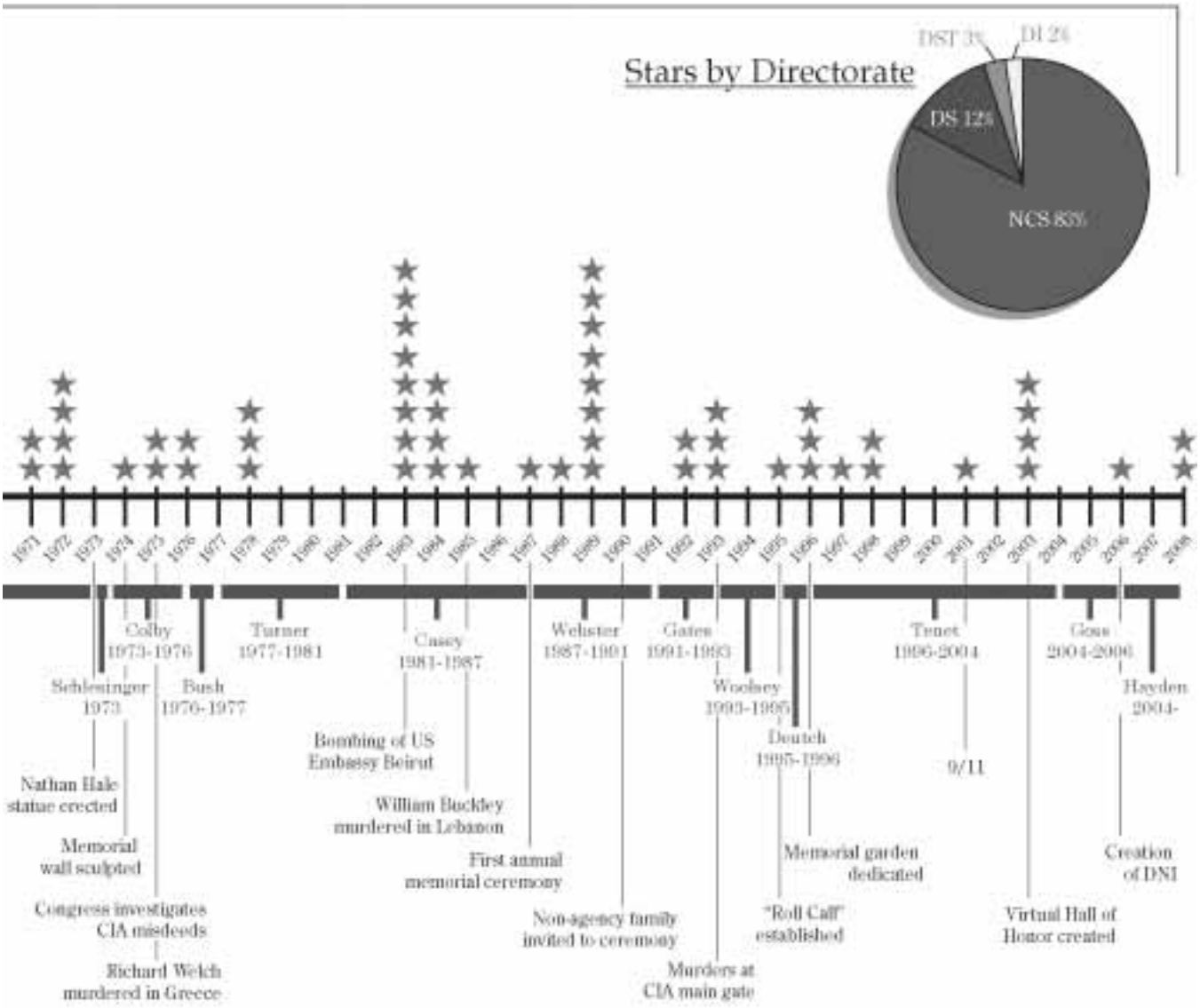
[26] For its Hall of Honor, the bureau honors only special agents. The FBI also distinguishes between agents killed by an adversary—honored as "Service Martyrs"—and those agents who died in the performance of their duties, but not as the result of adversarial action.

never losing sight of the fact that everything we do, each and every day, must reflect their greatness and honor their memory.[27]

The typical hyperbole of a ceremonial speech notwithstanding, this is unusual in that Tenet seemed to be saying that CIA, after hiding the past for so long, now defined itself *by* its past—a mythic past, if you will, before the calls for reform that led to the creation of the Director of National Intelligence, a past in which an undiminished CIA really led US intelligence, a past in which the "Central" in CIA meant something substantial. If so, the pendulum has swung completely, and one has to wonder if this is entirely a healthy thing.

If the pattern of the past holds, we may expect that, in the current climate of criticism of CIA, there may be an outpouring of sentiment to bolster

[27] "Agency Honors Colleagues at Annual Memorial Ceremony," *What's News at CIA*, 24 May 2004. Emphasis added. Much of Tenet's speech was classified; this excerpt was not.



The Agency at last does a good job of commemoration, probably as well as it can be done, given the constraints.

our sense of mission and dedication to country by stepping up commemorative activities. Already, for example, there are individual memorial trees and stones appearing on the Agency compound, and there currently is a proposal to honor dead foreign assets with a permanent memorial in the main OHB lobby.[28]

In any case, I must note that the main venue for CIA commemoration, the Memorial Wall, has become something of a focal point or point of self-reference for the Agency more generally. President Bush's visits to CIA in 2001 and again in 2005, when he came to reassure Agency employees that CIA was still "central" despite the changes in the US Intelligence Community, were held not in the Headquarters auditorium, as has been the case for most presidential visits, but occurred at the Memorial Wall, which perhaps has become the ground zero for how the Agency thinks of itself. Most recently, the unveiling of the official portrait of George Tenet revealed the image of the 18th DCI standing in front of the Memorial Wall—the only director's portrait with any reference at all to an identifiable Agency location.[29]

It took the Central Intelligence Agency most of its history—almost 50 years—to achieve a normal state of affairs (in terms of general human experience and expectations) regarding the remembrance of its honored dead. CIA came to commemoration late, but the Agency at last does a good job of it, probably as well as commemoration can be done, given the constraints. We've arrived at this place through the efforts of a few who challenged the dominant culture and when perceived hostility from the outside suggested the time was ripe for an assertion of identity in the service of memory.

[28] Those who decide these matters need to consider whether, by memorializing all foreign assets—many of whom worked for us for noble reasons but many who didn't—in this way, we are placing their services on a par with that of the CIA and OSS officers also memorialized there.

[29] I am indebted to CIA Museum curator Toni Hiley for this observation.

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